1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

PUBLIC WELFARE

I. INTRODUCTION

Under the Nationalist Government during the war years (1937-1945), the first and foremost agency in the work of public welfare was the National Relief Commission. It was the pivot upon which China's machinery of relief and rehabilitation depended. Through its various efforts from 1938 to 1944, 30,152,131 war and famine refugees were benefited.[1] In addition to immediate war and disaster relief, it operated clinics, occupational relief works, and organizations for the training and care of children. A number of private and semi-private welfare and relief agencies were also active, and most of these were founded to meet the needs of wartime conditions.[2] For women and children, there was the National Association for Refugee Children; also, the National Child Welfare Association of China, and the Women's Advisory Council. For servicemen, there were the Friends of the Wounded Society and the YMCA Emergency Service to Soldiers. And for general war work there were the China Wartime Relief Association and the National Chinese Women's Association for War Relief. Foreign agencies such as the United China Relief and the American Red Cross in China, and British and Canadian contributions distributed through different mediums, also helped to aid China in her distress.

The Ministry of Social Affairs as a department

1. China Handbook 1937-1945, compiled by Chinese Ministry of Information, New York, Macmillan, 1947, pp. 521-37.
2. Ibid.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

Due to the danger of growing unemployment, the Labor Employment Committee was established in July 1952 under the Government Administration Council. Regional Labor Employment Committees were established by August of the same year. Later, similar committees were formed on lower administration levels in the provinces, counties, and municipalities.[12] 746

The Red Cross Society of China has had a history of fifty years. In August 1950 the Communists assumed control and reorganized it under the leadership of the Ministry of Health. It has done more medical work than relief work, especially in construction projects where large numbers of laborers congregated. In Central-South China, the Communists have undertaken such major construction projects as the harnessing of the Hwai River, conservation work along the Yellow River in Honan Province, and the water works on Tungting Lake, in addition to numerous minor projects. To these projects the Red Cross sent medical and epidemic-prevention corps to guard the health of the battalions of laborers.[13] Among the minority nationalities, especially in Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces and on Hainan Island, the Communist Red Cross Society sent medical service teams.[14] (See study on Health and Sanitation.) 746 747

11. Relief Work Under the Chinese Communists, pp. 6-8.
12. Ibid., p. 8.
13. Ibid., p. 10.
14. Ibid., p. 8.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

In June 1938, during the war of resistance against Japan, the China Defense League was founded in Hong Kong by Soong Ching-ling. It acted as a channel for international aid chiefly to bring medicine and relief to Communist bases. In 1941, its headquarters was moved to Chungking. After the establishment of the Chinese Communist regime, this organization changed its name to the China Welfare Institute (August 1950).[15] Its center of activity has been in Shanghai. Beginning in January 1952, the China Welfare Institute has published an international, propaganda-disseminating, bi-monthly magazine, China Reconstructs, in the English language.

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The Chinese People's National Committee for the Protection of Children was formed on November 26, 1951 at Peking in response to the call issued at the Berlin conference of the International Federation of Democratic Women. The head of the Chinese organization is also Soong Ching-ling. The principles of this committee, which include the promotion of child welfare, were defined as "anti-imperialism" and "the promotion of world peace."[16]

A group of professors in Shanghai founded the China Tuberculosis Prevention Association in 1948. The Communist regime brought this organization under their control and moved it to Peking. In

15. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

16. People's Handbook, 1955, p. 396.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

August 1953, a conference of the workers was called and certain tasks and policies of the association were outlined. More than 100 tuberculosis-prevention units throughout the country are said to be affiliated with this organization.[17]

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IV. RELIEF AND RELIEF POLICIES

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During the convention of the National People's Congress in Peking in September 1954, Hsieh Chüeh-tsai, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Chinese Communist regime, made a report on the state of relief and welfare on the China Mainland. After alluding to the expanse and severity of natural calamities from 1949 to 1954, he reiterated the stand and policies of the Chinese Communist Government in conducting relief work. The first effort was to mobilize the broad masses to work in the prevention of drought, frost, harmful insects, and floods. Secondly, when disaster struck, the people were expected to adopt measures to "help themselves through production," "to economize during the famine period," and "to offer mutual aid." Only when absolutely necessary would the government proffer outright relief.[18]

In discussing public welfare and relief in Communist China, it is necessary to recognize how the Communist interprets certain common terms. The word relief, although generally taken

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17. Ibid., pp. 397-98.
18. Ibid., pp. 211-12.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

In Canton, in addition to similar celebrations, the Municipal "Children's Palace" was formally opened on June 1, 1952. As a "cultural center" for the children, the "palace" was reported to have a capacity of 1, 500, and three departments -- political education, artistic education, and a department of science -- as well as a children's library.[36]

A three-year progress report on child welfare was made by the Central-South Democratic Women's Federation in 1952. Incomplete statistics showed that 70 creches to care for 2, 000 children had been established in the urban districts, and that temporary organizations in the rural areas helped to care for 30, 000 children during the busy farm seasons. In the municipality of Wuhan before the Communist "liberation" in May 1949, the report stated, there had been only one crêche caring for 35 children, but in mid-1952 the number of creches had increased to 28, caring for 1, 000 children. The report claimed such achievements as a lower death rate for both infants and mothers and better health provisions for women and children. (See chapter on Health and Sanitation.) However, it also pointed out that in the many phases of child welfare, there was much need for improvement, especially in raising the standard of education for welfare workers.[37]

The first conference of the workers in women's and children's welfare was convened October 3-12,

36. South China Daily, June 1, 1952, p. 1.

37. Yangtze Daily, June 1, 1952, p. 3.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

1951, under the aegis of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation. With national production as the prime concern the conference decided the objective of welfare work should be to serve the masses of working women and their children. Its principal tasks were to promote better health and better health conditions for women and children, and to solve the problems which arose in the rearing and education of the children of working people. At the conference it was reported that 15,700 child welfare organizations, including crêches, kindergartens, and relief institutions, had been established on the China Mainland. Another report claimed that in two years ending November 1951, some 4,340 persons were trained to care for children and 3,743 were trained as health workers to care for women and children. In the same period, 7,295,095 persons were reported to have attended the 128 exhibits arranged by propaganda agencies to promote good health among women and children.[38]

By the end of 1952, there were 34,000 public health agencies for women and children in China as a whole, with additional mobile corps for the same purpose organized under all the provincial governments. In mining and construction works, in other enterprises, in organizations and schools, 2,738 crêches were in existence in 1952; in cities, 4,346 street crêches were set up, and in the rural areas 148,200 crêches were organized to care for some 850,000 children of agricultural families.[39]

38. New China Daily, May 30, 1953, p. 3.
39. Ibid., April 18, 1953, p. 4.